United Nations A/C.4/66/SR.22

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
7 February 2012

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 22nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 November 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Vivas Mendoza (Vice-Chair) ..... (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)
later: Mr. Ciss (Vice-Chair) ..... (Senegal)

Contents

Agenda item 53: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

11-58348 (E)

Please recycle

In the absence of Ms. Miculescu (Romania), Ms. Vivas Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 53: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/66/356, A/66/362, A/66/364, A/66/370, A/66/373 and A/66/400)

1. **Mr. León González** (Cuba) said that there was no justification for the prolonged Israeli military occupation of Palestine, or for the continued denial of the human rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to self-determination and the right of refugees to return to their lands in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The international community continued to witness an alarming escalation in violence in the occupied Arab territories. Poverty rates had soared, and the population could not meet its basic human needs. While the work of the Special Committee had made the refugees' living conditions less deplorable, Israel, in flagrant violation of international law, continued to impede its endeavours.

2. Israel's illegal practices continued to aggravate the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, yet the Security Council would not issue a statement in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Cuba urged the Security Council to take action, in accordance with the will of the international community. It was his hope that no permanent member would exercise its obsolete, anti-democratic veto power to deny the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people. Previous efforts of the international community and the United Nations had come to naught while the Israeli authorities, with flagrant disregard for international law and blatant disrespect for the resolutions of the United Nations, had pursued a policy of aggression, in particular in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Cuba condemned the prolonged Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian Territory and was appalled by the continuing impunity it enjoyed.

3. Cuba fully supported the request of Palestine to be a full Member of the United Nations and welcomed the recent decision of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference to admit Palestine as a member. UNESCO membership was renewed confirmation that the vast majority of the international community supported the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people, and would be another forum for the Palestinian cause.

4. His delegation was alarmed at the continuing deterioration in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, owing to Israel's excessive and indiscriminate use of force against Palestinian civilians as well as other illegal practices, including the inhuman collective punishment of Palestinians, especially the blockade of Gaza. Israel was waging an unequal war pitting a powerful army against a civilian population defending its right to exist within an independent State, thereby perpetrating a grave violation of Palestinians' human rights. The continuation of the policy of closures and the expansion of Israeli settlement construction through the seizure of vast tracts of land raised doubts as to whether Israel was serious about peace negotiations, and jeopardized the peace process.

5. His delegation reaffirmed the invalidity and illegality of the occupying Power's actions to alter the legal, physical and demographic character and the institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan and impose its jurisdiction and administration there. Such actions, including the expansion and construction of settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, flouted international law, international agreements and the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations.

6. He called on Israel to adhere to Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and to completely withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 1967 border. The continued illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory was the main obstacle to a just and lasting peace in the region. Cuba supported the Palestinian people in its endeavour to establish an independent, sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and called for Israel's unconditional return of the Arab territories occupied in June 1967.

7. **Mr. Han** Sung Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that while the international community had taken a number of measures in an effort to resolve the Middle East question, the Israeli stance and the prejudiced Middle East policies of some countries that actively sided with Israel blocked the peace process. The occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories and increasingly blatant

Israeli crimes against humanity continued. The matter needed to be resolved without delay.

8. The Sixteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement had underscored the urgency of resolving the question of Palestine, without which there would be no peace in the Middle East. The first step was to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and to its violations of human rights, and then to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

9. It was the will of the international community that Palestine should be recognized as an independent State. His Government had supported the Palestinian population in its struggle for independence since 1988, and would continue to do so. It was the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State and the obligation of the international community to admit it as a Member of the United Nations. Finally, the Israeli military occupation of the Syrian Golan was a clear violation of the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic. His Government strongly urged Israel to withdraw immediately from the occupied Syrian Golan in fulfilment of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

10. **Mr. Al-Saiyani** (Yemen) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/66/370) gave a clear account of the inhumane practices pursued by Israel against the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories, which contravened international humanitarian law and the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and had led to a deterioration in both the human rights and the social and economic situation of those peoples.

11. For more than four decades, Israel had violated the rights of the Palestinian people and paid no heed to the rules of international law, the Geneva Conventions or the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It continued to build the separation wall and to expand settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, impervious to the United Nations resolutions that stressed that such actions were in clear violation of the Geneva Conventions.

12. Israel was continuing its aggressive policies towards the Palestinian people. Those policies included assassination, hunger, oppression, land expropriation, border closures and turning Gaza into an immense prison, where the inmates were denied access to the most basic necessities. The human rights situation in Gaza had deteriorated even further since the most recent Israeli attack and the subsequent blockade, with children being particularly vulnerable to the consequent malnutrition and denial of proper health care.

13. The situation in the West Bank was no better. Israel continued to expropriate land, destroy homes, displace families and pursue other inhumane policies.

14. His delegation called upon the international community and the Security Council to shoulder their responsibility to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli problem, and renewed its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and its aspiration to establish its own independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. His delegation also condemned Israeli efforts to annex the Syrian Golan by expanding existing and establishing new settlements, exploiting natural resources and other illegitimate practices.

15. Settlement activity must be halted and Israel must withdraw from all occupied Arab territory, including the Syrian Golan, and the recommendations of the Special Committee must be implemented. The international community must bring pressure to bear on Israel to halt its flagrant violations of international law, respect United Nations resolutions and make a commitment to peace.

16. **Mr. Tarawneh** (Jordan) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee, which should continue its work until Israel ended its occupation of Arab territory. The report highlighted Israeli practices that constituted violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Israel should cooperate with the Special Committee and comply with its recommendations.

17. His delegation called on Israel to cease all practices that violated international law, including violent incursions, forced displacement, restrictions on movement of people and goods, the confiscation of property, arbitrary arrests of Palestinians, and excavations around and under Muslim and Christian holy sites. Such actions obstructed the peace process. Israel must comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and lift its blockade of Gaza. His delegation called on Israel to comply with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the Occupied

Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories.

18. The two-State solution was the only way to achieve comprehensive, lasting peace, and was the first step in addressing broader problems in the Middle East. His Government condemned Israel's recent approval of new settlement construction, in clear violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, as an affront to the peace process supported by the international community.

19. **Mr. Elhadji Issa** (Niger) said that a number of United Nations resolutions had been adopted in the search for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in conformity with international law. Niger had endorsed the path of peace towards a solution and had, through the United Nations and the African Union, upheld the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination within the 1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

20. It was indefensible that, despite forty years of commendable efforts by the international community to lead the parties to a peaceful solution, the people of Palestine were stateless and living in deplorable conditions. The two parties must overcome their differences and work towards peace so as to end the suffering. A lasting solution was a matter of urgency. His Government, together with the majority of the international community, supported the creation of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, alongside the State of Israel.

21. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) said that his Government endorsed the work of the Special Committee and called for the full implementation of the recommendations contained in its report, which detailed the continuing violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and the alarming impunity enjoyed by the occupying Power. Ending the culture of impunity was crucial to building the trust that was essential to meaningful Arab-Israeli negotiations. The report also described Israeli practices that changed the demographics of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including demolition of Palestinian homes, forced evictions, and revocation of residency rights. Ongoing settlement construction, a clear provocation, violated international law. Evidence of Palestinian heritage was being destroyed through changes in the status of cemeteries, mosques, and churches. His Government joined the international community in calling upon Israel to cease all settlement activity and to lift its blockade of Gaza, in compliance with its international obligations.

22. The request by Palestine for membership in the United Nations was an expression of its inalienable right to self-determination and had his Government's support. Only a strong State of Palestine as a responsible member of the international community could guarantee regional peace. Lasting peace in the region also required progress to be made on Israel's conflicts with the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. Living conditions in the occupied Syrian Golan had been adversely affected by the inequitable distribution of water resources, discrimination against workers and high tax rates, which were in direct contravention of Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Israel must withdraw completely from Lebanese territory and the occupied Syrian Golan in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Pakistan remained committed to peace for all inhabitants of the region.

23. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Palestinian people had lived under the oppressive Israeli military occupation for decades, deprived of their basic human rights. Shocking human rights violations persisted alongside the theft of land, resources and culture that were part and parcel of ongoing settlement activities. The prolonged conflict and resulting suffering were the direct result of Israel's continued defiance of the international community and its flagrant disregard for international law, United Nations resolutions, and the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people. The United Nations and the international community must uphold their political, moral and legal responsibility to end all of Israel's military occupations as well as its violations of the rights of the Palestinian people.

24. The illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip had steadily tightened since June 2007, with disastrous humanitarian and economic consequences. The savage blockade constituted a crime against humanity and posed a serious threat to international peace and security, and to regional stability. It was a form of collective punishment in violation of article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel was stepping up settlement activities in its attempt to further colonize the Occupied Palestinian Territory and change its demographic composition. Such activities were in

breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol I, United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

25. The Middle East conflict had at its core the tragedy of Palestine. His Government joined the international community in supporting a fair, just policy for Palestine based on the right of its people to defy the illegitimate occupying Power and achieve self-determination. Israeli crimes against Palestinians and other peoples in the region currently posed the most serious threat to regional and international peace and security. Lasting peace would not be achieved through blind support of the Israeli regime and its policy of State terrorism, but, rather, through the establishment of a peaceful, democratic process through which Palestinians could decide their own future. Clearly the United Nations was in a position to effectively further such a solution.

26. The occupied Syrian Golan was an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, and his Government was deeply concerned about the deterioration of the human rights situation and the increase in illegal Jewish settlements. He condemned all measures taken to undermine the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

27. **Mr. Mahmood** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation commended the efforts of the members of the Special Committee who, despite Israel's persistent refusal to cooperate, had been able to visit Gaza and gain first-hand experience that was reflected in the report. For decades the Palestinian people had suffered collective punishment and violations of their human rights, including the right to self-determination. It was particularly shocking that small children and the elderly were not spared Israeli atrocities.

28. The Israeli blockade had aggravated the situation: an alarming 70 per cent of the Palestinian population in Gaza depended on humanitarian aid, while 90 per cent of factories in Gaza had closed and 38 per cent of its families were grappling with food insecurity. The blockade violated human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in international humanitarian law and, in particular, in the Fourth Geneva Convention. Recent reports confirming Israel's intention to expand settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank were also of grave concern.

29. His delegation urged Israel to cease settlement activity and to lift its embargo and allow free movement of goods, persons and humanitarian aid throughout the occupied territories. It was imperative to end the collective punishment of the people of Gaza, to stop the construction of the separation wall and to comply with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as with the Fourth Geneva Convention. Trust must be built to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict through the two-State solution.

30. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that the work of the Special Committee confirmed that Israel continued its widescale violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied territories; the occupying Power blatantly disregarded the fundamental rights to life, freedom of movement and speech, and to medical care. The absolute impunity of Israel as it confiscated land, demolished homes, extended illegal settlements and restricted the movement of Palestinians was alarming.

31. The situation in the Gaza Strip was very serious. The inhabitants of the overpopulated and largely poor territory were enduring the consequences of the Israeli blockade, which limited humanitarian access, restricted desperately needed imports, prohibited exports and prevented young Palestinians from visiting their families or attending universities outside Gaza. Even more serious was the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. He welcomed the recent prisoner exchange, but noted that more than 5,000 people remained imprisoned and were largely subjected to poor treatment and torture. The international community could no longer ignore the flagrant disregard for international law and must act swiftly to free the prisoners who were illegally detained.

32. In the Syrian Golan, illegally annexed in an unprecedented act, the living conditions of the Syrian inhabitants were deteriorating daily owing to arbitrary arrests and detentions and unacceptable challenges to their Arab identity. Such practices confirmed the doubts of his delegation that Israel's true intention was to redraw the map in the occupied territories by systematically annexing land and doing away with any Palestinian presence. They also revealed the intransigence of Israel, as it refused all attempts to resolve the crisis through international efforts to resume negotiations. There could be no settlement of the conflict until Israel ended its occupation, withdrew

its forces from all the occupied Arab territories, dismantled existing settlements, suspended the construction of the separation wall and abandoned all policies that compromised the success of the peace process.

33. His delegation regretted that international and regional initiatives had not resulted in the renewal of direct negotiations owing to Israel's intransigence and impunity. That impunity undermined the Organization's credibility, allowed the occupying Power to continue its human rights violations, and frustrated the oppressed population. The Security Council must exercise its prerogatives with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security and end Israel's impunity. The request of the State of Palestine to be admitted as a Member of the United Nations was an opportunity for the Security Council to correct a long-standing injustice, in an unequivocal confirmation by the international community that it would uphold international law.

34. **Mr. Kafeero** (Uganda) said that his delegation regretted that despite international and regional efforts the peace process was deadlocked, leading to more violence. Rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel and Israeli air strikes on Gaza were of concern. While the support of the international community was crucial, Israel and Palestine bore primary responsibility for achieving comprehensive, lasting peace and he called on both parties to resume negotiations and take bold decisions.

35. Uganda supported the two-State solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab peace initiative and the road map. All parties must adhere to their obligations under the road map. It was crucial to resume regional negotiations and he welcomed the recent prisoner exchange agreement, which could foster greater cooperation. Yet his Government was deeply concerned that new Israeli settlement units had been approved, and called for an immediate freeze on all settlement activity. The humanitarian situation in Gaza was another concern, and he called on Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza and on all parties to adhere to Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

36. His delegation commended the humanitarian work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), but noted that it continued to face funding shortfalls. He called on the international community to provide further support to UNRWA. Finally, he urged Israel and Palestine to take practical steps toward direct negotiations and affirmed that the international community had a crucial support role in the process of achieving lasting peace.

37. **Mr. Mansour** (Lebanon) said that after decades of efforts by the international community to broker a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, Israel still would not negotiate on final status issues. Faced with the occupying Power's refusal to freeze settlements, to return to the 1967 borders, to negotiate over the status of Jerusalem, and to offer the right of return to Palestinian refugees, the State of Palestine had decided to continue its legitimate struggle to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination by seeking membership in the United Nations. Its application should be considered on its merits alone and in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter, in compliance with the 1948 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Admission to the United Nations should not depend on the outcome of negotiations on Palestine as that would grant Israel the right to veto the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

38. The Quartet had reiterated the obligations of both parties and had called on them to refrain from provocations, yet Israel had approved plans to build thousands of settlement units on land illegally annexed from Palestinian villages. The occupying Power had demolished Palestinian residences and farms, uprooted hundreds of olive and almond trees, and physically assaulted Palestinian civilians, as documented by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Settlement activity, including the separation wall, undermined the two-State solution in a bid by Israel to confiscate Palestinian land and alter the identity and status of East Jerusalem. It was clear that Israel was choosing settlements and the illegal blockade of Gaza over peace. Israel did not honour Palestinians' right to life; its alleged easing of the blockade had done little to mitigate its effects and did not absolve the occupying Power of its responsibilities. No peace could be envisaged as long as Israel continued to impose collective punishment on the people of Palestine.

39. Israeli practices remained a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, including mechanisms for the protection of civilians enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention and the 1907 Hague Rules of War

and Occupation. A lasting peace must include the Syrian Arab Republic, and Israel must comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981); Israel must also withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Any attempt by Israel to alter the legal, material and demographic status of the Golan was a violation of international law. The wall built to separate people in the occupied Syrian Golan from their family members outside the Occupied Territory was further evidence of the cruelty of Israel's practices. Lebanon condemned Israeli restrictions on access to water in the occupied Golan, the denial of family visits to the Syrian Arab Republic and the brutal practices in prisons in the occupied Syrian Golan.

40. Palestine had extended its hand to Israel in an effort to build peace, yet Israel's response had been to increase settlement activity and freeze the transfer of Palestinian tax revenues in apparent punishment for its UNESCO membership. It was the duty of the international community to end the occupation of the State of Palestine and to protect its people from human rights violations.

41. *Mr. Ciss (Senegal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

42. **Mr. Govender** (South Africa) said that over the years the Special Committee had carried out its tasks diligently, even when the Israeli authorities had refused to cooperate, yet only strict adherence by the occupying Power to international human rights and humanitarian law and to its obligations under human rights treaties and conventions would change the human rights situation of the Palestinian people. Israeli practices and policies impinged upon the human rights and well-being of the Palestinian people and the people of the occupied Syrian Golan. The occupying Power asserted that millions throughout the Arab world were calling for basic human rights; the international community had seen that those calls were not going unheeded. Yet the Palestinian people's quest for recognition of their human rights was more compelling, not least since they were calling for recognition of their rights by those who claimed to be the only free society in the Middle East.

43. The occupying Power's obligation to safeguard human rights was clearly contained in the international conventions that it had ratified. Indeed, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* affirmed that international human rights conventions were applicable to Israeli acts in the occupied territories. Yet attempts by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967 and by the Special Committee to carry out their mandates had met with resistance by the Israeli Government. Member States had the responsibility to assist United Nations-mandated entities to fully carry out their tasks, including by requiring the implementation of recommendation 63, on compliance by Israel with United Nations resolutions, contained in the report of the Special Committee (A/66/370).

44. The Palestinian people endured crippling sanctions owing to the ongoing illegal blockade of Gaza. All international law experts had noted that the blockade adversely affected the provision of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. While the Charter provided for the right to self-defence, in the exercise of that right Israel was forcing civilian populations in Palestine and the Syrian Golan to pay a disproportionate price for actions for which they were not responsible. Bedouin communities in the West Bank had been victimized for decades, their traditional pastoral way of life under constant threat owing to Israeli settlement activity. The settlement policies contravened the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibited the transfer of civilian populations into occupied territories, and subjected Palestinians to the double jeopardy of forced removals and settler violence.

45. The Israeli Government was required to protect civilian populations living under its occupation, yet ongoing physical attacks on civilians and vandalism of their villages and agricultural lands, perpetrated by Israeli settlers, captured on video and posted to social networking sites, went unpunished by Israeli defence and police forces. Israel should comply with the Special Rapporteur's recommendations for the adoption of guidelines, as proposed by the non-governmental organization B'Tselem, on the protection of Palestinian children living under occupation as a minimum basis for compliance with international humanitarian law, and for the importation into Gaza of materials needed to repair water and electricity infrastructure. Israel should lift the blockade of Gaza, and, again heeding the advice of the Special Rapporteur, a request should be made to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion

on the legal status of prolonged occupation, as aggravated by the transfer of large numbers of persons from the occupying Power and the imposition of a dual and discriminatory administrative and legal system in the West Bank, including Jerusalem. A permanent solution to the conflict was the ideal, but in the meantime he urged the Israeli authorities to fully cooperate with all United Nations entities in carrying out their mandated tasks.

46. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his Government was working to fulfil the rightful demands of the people of the Syrian Arab Republic for democratic reform, but would not permit those demands to be co-opted to allow acts of terrorism. Statements by the representative of Israel alleging human rights violations in the Syrian Arab Republic were failed attempts to divert international public opinion away from Israeli crimes in the occupied Arab territories. The representative of Israel would not be allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of his country, or to detract from the discussion of Israeli practices affecting the human rights of Arabs in the occupied territories.

47. It was surprising that the representative of Israel spoke of his Government's commitment to human rights when Israel continuously violated human rights in the occupied territories and had for decades prevented human rights activists and United Nations personnel, and even the Special Committee, from carrying out their mandated talks. If, as Israel claimed, the work of the Special Committee were politicized, then the same must be true of all the statements — not only the condemnation of Israeli practices — that had been made by Members States at the current session and over the years, including those by Israel's friends. Israel's only recourse was to accuse the United Nations of political bias. More than 1,000 resolutions condemning Israeli occupation and violations of human rights had been adopted — a record number of resolutions to have one State comply with international law. Yet Israel, in flagrant defiance of the United Nations and the international community, had not implemented any.

48. The representative of Israel refused to acknowledge documented human rights violations, the unprecedented, atrocious crimes against the innocent, amounting to ethnic cleansing, perpetrated by Israel. He wondered whether the representative of Israel had read the reports introduced by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, all documenting Israel's violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories. It was, perhaps, not so strange after all that Israel denied reality as daily it pursued its violent policies against the peoples of the region. It was crucial to understand the Israeli concept of democracy and human rights, which included occupying others' lands, building settlements, illegally detaining Palestinians, launching wars against the States of the region, imposing an inhuman blockade on Gaza, carrying out assassinations, and desecrating Christian and Muslim holy sites in the Occupied Territory.

49. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel was employing a well-worn strategy by inventing baseless allegations to turn the attention of the international community away from its abhorrent criminal policies in the Middle East. There were no human rights principles that were not systematically violated by the Israeli regime. United Nations resolutions and reports had attested to the fact that Israel did not respect the basic values and human rights held dear in the civilized world. It was high time that the international community countered the Israeli regime's inhuman practices afflicting the defenceless Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories.

50. **Mr. Keidar** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, reiterated that the United Nations had for decades invested resources in the Special Committee to produce biased reports against Israel, the only free society in the Middle East, while the people of the region suffered the pain and humiliation of repression, economic stagnation and tyranny. In an effort to contextualize the statements by the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, people were being slaughtered in the streets of Syria and the Human Rights Committee had recently noted that approximately 3,500 people had been killed there since March. Women were being stoned to death in Iran and millions were demanding their basic rights throughout the Arab world.

51. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was clear that the occupying Power was not in an enviable position in respect of its human rights record. The representative of Israel was attempting to misrepresent the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to divert international attention away from the terrorist and racist policies of

Israel, and to present his country as the only democratic country in the region. Yet evidence had accumulated attesting to Israel's Zionist approach, unmatched in its brutality, to the Arab peoples of the occupied territories. There was not enough time to enumerate all of the atrocities committed by Israel, but if all of its crimes against humanity were compiled in one document, it would be the bulkiest document in the world.

52. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted that instead of answering to world public opinion in respect of its unparalleled record of non-compliance with humanitarian and human rights principles and its long catalogue of atrocities and crimes against humanity, Israeli officials consistently made inflammatory and baseless allegations against other countries. The blatant support that some Powers granted the Israeli regime was one of the world's bitterest realities. By blocking every action against the inhuman policies of the Israeli regime, its supporters had given it a blank cheque to violate the internationally recognized rights of the Palestinian people and other peoples of the region with impunity. It was crucial to put an end to such acts. The United Nations should uphold its responsibilities, support Palestine and relieve the Palestinian people of its protracted suffering under occupation.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.